

PETITION NO. 1042 – Somers Solar Center, LLC Petition for a } Connecticut
Declaratory Ruling that no Certificate of Environmental }
Compatibility and Public Need is required for the construction } Siting
and operation of a 5.0 MW AC Solar Photovoltaic Project located }
at 458 & 488 South Road, Somers, Connecticut. } Council

March 21, 2013

Opinion

On October 31, 2012, Somers Solar Center, LLC (SSC) submitted a petition to the Connecticut Siting Council (Council) for a declaratory ruling that no Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need (Certificate) is required for the construction and operation of a 5.0 megawatt (MW) Alternating Current (AC) Solar Photovoltaic Generating facility located at 458 and 488 South Road in Somers, Connecticut. SSC was the only participant in this proceeding.

SSC's project would consist of the installation of up to 31,000 solar photovoltaic (PV) panels and associated ground equipment. The solar panels would be divided into four separate arrays. The 31,000 panels would be the maximum number that would be installed. The final number of panels would depend on SSC's decision to install some tracking panels or to rely only on fixed tilt panels. Should SSC decide to install only fixed tilt panels, the final number of solar panels would be approximately 20% less than the 31,000 maximum. Access and maintenance roads for the project would be gravel.

SSC's proposed project is located on two parcels of property that, together, comprise 106 acres. The parcels are owned by The Pleasant View Farms Realty Company, which uses them for agricultural production (open hay and corn fields). SSC, in accordance with the wishes of town officials, will file a lot line revision to consolidate the two separate properties into one property to be known as 488 South Road (Property). If SSC were to install its maximum number of solar panels, it would utilize approximately 95 acres of the Pleasant View Farms property.

The project would be a "grid-side distributed resources" facility, as defined in CGS § 16-1(a)(43). It was submitted in response to a Request for Proposal (RFP) for zero emission Class I renewable energy source generation facilities issued by Connecticut's Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) in December, 2011. DEEP's RFP was issued in accordance with the requirements of Section 127 of Public Act 11-80, *An Act Concerning the Establishment of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and Planning for Connecticut's Energy Future*. SSC's proposal was one of two projects selected out of 21 proposals submitted for DEEP's RFP process.

The project would be interconnected to the Connecticut Light & Power (CL&P) distribution network at an existing 23kV distribution feeder located along South Road in Somers. The interconnection would be made in accordance with CL&P technical standards and the requirements of the State of Connecticut, ISO-New England (ISO-NE), and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). It would consist of an approximately 500-foot distribution line to be strung at spans of approximately 100 feet on wooden poles approximately 50 feet high. A switchyard with a SCADA room, inverters and their associated pads, and other related electrical equipment would be contained on an approximately 100-foot by 100-foot graded pad.

No negative impacts to federal and State-listed species are anticipated to result from the proposed project, and the project has a very low potential to affect any archaeological or historic resources. Although there are wetlands on the project's site and a small watercourse bisects the property, any project-related development would occur outside of the 100-foot wetland setback observed in the Town of Somers' inland wetland regulations.

The areas on the property planned for panel arrays are on relatively level ground that has previously been cleared and used for agriculture or for sand and gravel quarrying. Thus, minimal grading would be necessary and only about 10 mature trees would have to be cut.

Routine maintenance of the panels would have no adverse environmental impacts. Mowing, not chemicals, would be used to control vegetation within the panel arrays; the panels would be cleaned only with water, if rainfall is not sufficient; and snow-clearing would be accomplished either by heating from the panels themselves, or, in cases of heavy snowfall, by hand.

The project would have limited visual impact on surrounding properties as it would be screened by vegetation and topography. Any glare from the solar panels would be comparable to the glare associated with a lake.

After reviewing the record of this proceeding, the Council finds that there would be no significant adverse environmental impacts associated with the construction and operation of a 5.0 MW AC Solar Photovoltaic Project on the property for which it is proposed. Furthermore, this proposed solar project would increase "the use of clean energy and technologies that support clean energy" in accordance with Section 1 of Public Act No. 11-80: *An Act Concerning the Establishment of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and Planning for Connecticut's Energy Future*.

Based on the record in this proceeding, the Council finds that there would be no significant adverse environmental effect associated with the construction of a 5.0 MW AC Solar Photovoltaic Project at 458 and 488 South Road in Somers, Connecticut. In addition, the Project would meet all applicable U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) Ambient Air Quality Standards and Water Quality Standards and would be consistent with the state's energy policy as stated in C.G.S. § 16a-35k (Public Act No. 11-80). Therefore, the Council will grant the Petition for declaratory ruling that a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need is not required for this project.